

SPECIAL FEATURE (5 OF 12)
MATTHEW SCHNEIDER/LOS ANGELES

FEBRUARY 1, 1978

ACADEMY SPECIAL #5--THE EDITOR: Verna Fields
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS AND INTERVIEW IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: THIS APRIL OF 1978, THE AMERICAN FILM INDUSTRY IS MARKING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "OSCAR"--THE GOLDEN STATUETTE AWARDED EACH YEAR FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE VARIOUS ARTS AND CRAFTS OF FILMMAKING. IN COOPERATION WITH THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES, VOA IS PRESENTING A SERIES OF SPECIAL INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT HOLLYWOOD FILMMAKERS -- ALL ACADEMY AWARD WINNERS. TODAY'S REPORT, "THE EDITOR," PUTTING IT TOGETHER.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- FIELDS

"THE EDITOR WILL PUT THE FILM THAT THE DIRECTOR SHOT TOGETHER IN THE FORM OF THE STORY THAT'S BEING TOLD IN THE SCRIPT. HOWEVER, IN DOING THAT THE EDITOR IS USUALLY INVOLVED WITH THE DIRECTOR (IN THE) VERY, VERY EARLY STAGES TO DISCUSS HOW THE DIRECTOR PLANS ON SHOOTING IT, WHAT HE ENVISIONS, WHAT HIS CONCEPT OF THE FILM IS. THEY (EDITORS) ARE USUALLY PRESENT FOR ALL OF THE SCREENINGS OF ALL OF THE FILM THAT IS SHOT, THEY DISCUSS WITH THE DIRECTOR HOW HE VISUALIZES IT, DISCUSS SCRIPT, AGAIN DISCUSS CONCEPT AS THEY GO ALONG. IT IS PROBABLY THE EDITOR'S FUNCTION TO FIND THE VERY, VERY BEST MOMENTS THE BEST READINGS AND THE BEST ACTION, ALWAYS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DIRECTOR, TO TELL THAT STORY WITH, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE EDITOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WATCHING OVER THE SOUND EFFECTS, THE MUSIC, THE FINAL MIX, THE LAB WORK AND UNTIL FRUITION, THE (FINAL) PRINT."

VOICE: THE VOICE OF VERA FIELDS, THE ACADEMY AWARD WINNING EDITOR OF "JAWS," "AMERICAN GRAFFITI," AND "PAPER MOON." MS. FIELDS WHO HAS WORKED FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS IN HOLLYWOOD AND IS THE FIRST FEMALE EDITOR TO WIN AN ACADEMY AWARD, HAS OFTEN BEEN CALLED "A DIRECTOR'S EDITOR", A LABEL SHE DOESN'T MIND, SINCE SHE VIEWS HER OWN JOB AS ACTUALLY AN EXTENSION OF THE DIRECTOR'S.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- FIELDS

"I FEEL THAT AN EDITOR, IN A WAY, IS -- OR THAT ONE OF THE EDITOR'S FUNCTIONS IS -- TO HELP THE CINEMATOGRAPHER, THE DIRECTOR, THE WRITER DO WHAT THEY HAVE ALREADY SET OUT TO DO; TO TELL THE STORY AS THE WRITER WROTE IT. TO SHOW WHAT THE CINEMATOGRAPHER DID, TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE."

OICE: MS. FIELDS HAS ALSO WORKED IN FILM AS A DOCUMENTARY DIRECTOR AND SOUND EDITOR. FOR SEVERAL YEARS SHE TAUGHT A FILM EDITING COURSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, THE TRAINING GROUND FOR MANY MEMBERS OF HOLLYWOODS' FILM FRATERNITY.

MS. FIELDS HAS WORKED AS AN EDITOR FOR SEVERAL OF THE NEW GENERATION OF HOLLYWOOD DIRECTORS INCLUDING GEORGE LUCAS, THE DIRECTOR AND WRITER OF "STAR WARS" AND AMERICAN GRAFFITI" AND STEVEN SPELBERG WHO DIRECTED "JAWS" AND THE RECENTLY RELEASED "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND."

TAPE: CUT THREE -- FIELDS

"THERE ARE DIRECTORS WHO ARE VERY, VERY CONCERNED WITH THEIR ACTORS, WITH PERFORMANCE AND WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE THE DETAILS OF COVERAGE UP TO THE EDITOR -- AND WANT THE EDITOR TO SAY, 'LOOK, BE SURE YOU GIVE ME A CLOSE SHOT OF THIS,' OR 'I NEED A TWO-SHOT OF THAT' TO HELP WORK A SITUATION.' THERE ARE OTHER DIRECTORS WHO ARE VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT TECHNIQUE AND DON'T NEED THAT KIND OF ADVICE, ASSISTANCE OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT. I THINK THAT AN EDITOR IN PUTTING THE FILM TOGETHER CAN FORESEE PROBLEMS THAT A DIRECTOR WHO IS VERY INTENT ON WORKING ON THE SEQUENCE OR THE SCENE HE IS DOING, CANNOT SEE A SLIGHTLY MORE OBJECTIVE PICTURE. [I

CAN ONLY SAY THAT ON A SET, A DIRECTOR MIGHT BE DIRECTING A SCENE WHERE IN 'TAKE ONE,' HE NOTICED A WONDERFUL FLICKER OF AN EYE, DURING A SCENE, AND THEN IN 'TAKE THREE' THE SMILE OVER ANOTHER LINE (OR DIALOGUE) IS PARTICULARLY GOOD, THE WAY SHE (AN ACTRESS) SAGGED HER SHOULDERS AT THE BAD NEWS IN 'TAKE SEVEN' WAS INCREDIBLE. WELL, IT'S THE EDITOR'S JOB TO TRY TO GET ALL THREE OF THOSE THINGS IN, BY MANIPULATING THE FILM."

VOICE: MS. FIELDS, WHO RECENTLY WAS PROMOTED TO VICE PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES, BELIEVES THAT A GOOD EDITOR MUST BRING TO THE JOB AN EXTRA MEASURE OF PATIENCE, ENTHUSIASM, A CONCERN FOR DETAIL AND A GOOD SENSE OF THE DRAMATIC. AND NO EGO.

TAPE: FOUR -- FIELDS

"THE REASON I SAY ABOUT THE 'NO EGO' IS THAT THE EDITOR IS ALWAYS IN A VERY, VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION AS FAR AS DIRECTORS ARE CONCERNED. MAYBE ITS BECAUSE THE WORD 'EDITOR' IMPLIES CORRECTION. BUT DIRECTORS DON'T LIKE TO THINK THAT EDITORS SAVED A PICTURE; HELPED A PICTURE. THEY MOST OFTEN DON'T LIKE TO FEEL THAT WAY, SO THERE IS A MAJOR PROBLEM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EGO. I THINK ONE HAS TO LET THE DIRECTOR KNOW UP FRONT (EARLY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP) THAT YOU'RE NOT COMPETING WITH HIM, THAT YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO TAKE GLORY AWAY, THAT YOU'RE ONLY THERE TO BE AN EXTENSION OF HIS WORK."

VOICE: MS. FIELDS SAYS THE ONLY WAY AN EDITOR CAN PREPARE FOR A FILM IS TO KNOW WHAT THE DIRECTOR HAS IN MIND, AND TO "GET YOUR CUTTING ROOM (EDITING ROOM) READY. SINCE SHE BELIEVES THAT THE EDITOR IS REALLY THE LOGICAL EXTENSION OF THE DIRECTOR, WHAT DEGREE OF CREATIVITY DOES THE EDITOR BRING TO THE FILM?

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- FIELDS

"VERY FEW PICTURES ARE SHOT IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOME PRETTY BRILLIANT CREATIVITY TO MAKE IT WORK. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THE EDITOR DID NOT WRITE THE STORY, AND THE EDITOR DID NOT DIRECT THE FILM, THE DIRECTOR PUT THE FILM TOGETHER WITH ALL THE CREATIVITY POSSIBLE. YES, I THINK (THE EDITOR'S) IS A VERY CREATIVE JOB, ALTHOUGH THE EDITOR'S CREATIVITY IS SOMETHING THAT IS REALLY SUBSERVIENT TO THE CREATIVITY OF BOTH THE WRITER AND DIRECTOR."

VOICE: "RARELY CAN A GOOD EDITOR SAVE A BAD FILM. BUT A GOOD EDITOR," INSISTS MS. FIELDS, "SURE CAN MAKE A PICTURE BETTER.

TAPE: CUT SIX -- FIELDS

"I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT FOR EDITORS TO GO AROUND SAYING THAT THEY SAVED SOMETHING. I MEAN YOU OFTEN HEAR EDITORS SAY; 'WELL, YOU KNOW THE DIRECTOR DIDN'T GIVE ME A CLOSE-UP, BUT I HAPPENED TO FIND ONE BEFORE THE SLATE (CLAP-BOARD IDENTIFICATION OF FILMED SEQUENCE) WHERE THE ACTOR WAS DOING JUST THE RIGHT THING, AND I USED IT. AND, BOY, I SAVED THAT SCENE.' WELL, THAT'S HIS JOB, TO LOOK FOR THE LITTLE MOMENT HERE AND THERE. THAT'S CREATIVE."

VOICE: VERNA FIELDS ON EDITING, AND CREATIVITY IN MOTION PICTURES.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN THE FIFTH IN A SERIES OF SPECIAL REPORTS BASED
ON CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICAN FILMMAKERS, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF "OSCAR" THE ANNUAL AWARD OF
ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURES ARTS AND SCIENCES.

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